



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 4, Issue 8

August 2014

USDA Joins Nation's Communities to Feed Children During Summer Meal Gap

By Jeff Greenfield

This year Secretary Vilsack put great emphasis on the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). While most kids are exuberantly shouting, "school's out!" many parents quietly worry about just how they're going to feed their kids during the summer. The SFSP links these parents to sites where children 18 and under can get a free meal during the summer months when schools are closed.

Last year, our efforts resulted in a historic increase in the number of meals served nationwide by more than seven million compared to the previous year. Our challenge is to serve at least 10 million more meals this summer. We know it's an aggressive goal, but with strong support from individuals, communities, State and local governments, and advocates nationwide, we can provide more children with nutritious meals during their time out of school.

All summer, FNS has been getting the word out to help families, parents, and children learn about the program and help them identify sites in their community. We encouraged advocates and sponsoring organizations to distribute summer flyers and other outreach materials, though our [Summer Meals Toolkit](#). These efforts have been very successful, and we have seen our site involvement rise to over 40,000. That means more kids and teens all over the country have been receiving healthy summer meals.

By ensuring these children and families know where they can find meals in every community, we can reach our goal.

A big thank you to all USDA employees who have helped us spread the word!



Secretary Tom Vilsack is joined by Maryland Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown; Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake; and Baltimore City Schools CEO Dr. Gregory Thornton to bring attention to the FNS Summer Food Service Program.

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ART & AGRICULTURE ENTRIES 2014 CAST YOUR VOTE TODAY!

It's time to choose your favorite ART pieces in each of the 10 categories. With so much creativity and talent among USDA Employees, this will be a close competition! You can only vote for one piece of artwork per category.

[Click Here to Vote](#)

(Voting closes August 29th!)

USDA To Observe National Work & Family Month

By Debra Arnold

On October 16th, USDA will observe National Work and Family Month with an Open House and Expo from 11:00am-2:00pm on the Whitten Patio and in the South Building Cafeteria here in Washington, D.C.

The Whitten patio will host an “Exhibitor Hall” of both internal and external worklife practitioners displaying the benefits, resources, and groundbreaking movements to support workplace flexibilities and worklife programs. Guest speakers will be presenting on the same subject in the South Building cafeteria.

Start planning now for observances in your area, and stay tuned for the September edition of the Secretary’s Newsletter for more details, or send emails to wellness@dm.usda.gov.



USDA Employees Participate in Gleaning Event for FFF Campaign

USDA employees from NRCS, FSIS, APHIS, FNS, REE, and OSEC participated in a gleaning event to support the Feds Feed Families Campaign on August 8, 2014.

The USDA Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program hosted the gleaning event at Miller Farms, Maryland. Participants spent the day gleaning collard greens for a local food bank.



USDA Expands Participation in Summer Youth Employment Programs

By Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman

Since 2010, Departmental Management (DM) has coordinated efforts to secure students from the DC Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). This summer, USDA was able to continue to provide career exploration opportunities that directly linked to academic and occupational learning at no cost to the Department.

USDA was able to provide career exploration to selected students from several summer youth employment programs from the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland. According to representatives from the Youth@Work–Summer Youth Enrichment Program, USDA is the first Federal agency in the country to participate in the program providing summer placements for Prince Georges youth. There is an ongoing effort to strategically identify various county, city and state programs that fund employment programs for youth ages 14-21.

In FY’15, DM will coordinate teleconferences and/or webinars on program management and reporting requirements to support USDA Mission Areas, Agencies and Offices in establishing initial partnership opportunities with youth employment programs in their respective local commuting areas. To assist with the continued efforts of the USDA SYEP Nationwide Initiatives—or to share details for existing youth employment programs outside of the Metropolitan Washington DC area—please contact the DM Recruitment Program Manager, Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman at recruitment@dm.usda.gov.

OPEDA Opens New Employee Service Center, Announces Scholarship Opportunities

By Dana Manning

The Organization of Professional Employees of the United States Department of Agriculture (OPEDA) is a non-profit, employee member based organization dedicated to supporting the development and growth of all USDA employees. OPEDA places a high premium on education and believes in supporting its members and their families, offering several scholarships of up to \$500 to students from all parts of the country. Scholarships awarded are in recognition of the dedicated service of OPEDA's 24th President, John W. Peterson and the heroic service of Steven "Tom" Stefani, a Forest Service Range Conservationist who made the ultimate sacrifice while on assignment in Afghanistan.

To learn more about OPEDA membership and scholarship opportunities, we encourage all USDA employees to visit OPEDA's updated website at www.OPEDA.org. The website now offers exciting information on the annual scholarship, the recent Unsung Hero Award Ceremony, and upcoming USDA events. We welcome you to visit our new employee service center (located at the USDA headquarters South building, first floor, wing 2, room 1212 in between the credit union and cafeteria.) Scholarship applicants must be at least a college freshman or equivalent by fall term 2014, and must submit the requested documents postmarked no later than August 31, 2014, to be considered. All OPEDA members are eligible to apply. Membership is open to all USDA employees and retirees regardless of age, sex, race, religion, nationality, or political affiliation. Send applications to: Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA), P.O. Box 23762, Washington, DC 20026-3762. For further information on the OPEDA Scholarship Program, please contact OPEDA at 202-720-4898 or e-mail oped@dm.usda.gov.

Time Running Out to Donate to 2014 Feds Feed Families

By John Glover

The Feds Feed Families campaign ends August 27, 2014. Last year, USDA led all Federal departments, donating more than 4.3 million pounds of the 8.9 million pounds of food collected. Although the USDA does not have a specific FFF donation goal this year, Secretary Vilsack has challenged agencies to "beat your previous best." As of July, USDA employees had donated more than 1.8 million pounds of food for 2014. There is still time to contribute! We need to make a strong finish in order to ensure a successful campaign. This year, USDA is also accepting pet food donations. To track pet food donations, a separate category for pet food has been added to the FFF reporting protocols. Please ensure you are reporting your donations as a separate category through your FFF coordinators and champions. For more information about FFF, please visit the [FFF USDA Connect](http://FFF.USDA.Connect) site.

Risk Management Agency Partners with State Department

By Duane Voy

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) St. Paul Regional Office recently hosted an emerging leader from Azerbaijan participating in the U.S. Department of State's [Professional Fellows Program](http://Professional.Fellows.Program), a two-way exchange embracing the power of individuals to find solutions to common challenges. In total, 200 leaders from more than 45 countries and territories participated in the Professional Fellows Program, featuring a short-term assignment with U.S. organizations.



During this one-month assignment with RMA, Firdovsi Aghashirinov learned first-hand how issues in crop insurance are addressed in the United States. Duane Voy, Director of the RMA St. Paul Regional Office introduced an overview of USDA and the Federal Crop Insurance program and included stakeholders to help explain the role and interaction that makes the U.S. crop insurance program so successful. "This was a great opportunity for USDA to collaborate and assist another government in agricultural risk management," says Voy. As the concluding piece of their fellowships, all 200 participants traveled to Washington, D.C., to take part in the Professional Fellows Congress, providing an opportunity for the Fellows to share best practices and gain key insights into effective leadership models in their respective fields.

Pictured (L to R): Risk Management Agency Deputy Director Mark Gutierrez, Firdovsi Aghashirinov, and RMA Regional Director Duane Voy.

USDA Expanding Partnerships with the Hispanic Community

By Gregory Rosenthal and Jacqueline Padrón

USDA participated in the League of United Latin American Citizens' (LULAC) National Convention, Federal Training Institute (FTI), and an Exposition, on July 8-12, 2014. One of the convention highlights was Dr. Joe Leonard, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, who was a featured speaker at the Citizenship Naturalization Ceremony.

USDA's Office of Human Resources Management's Diversity, Recruitment, and Work/Life Division held an Agency Forum July 8 attended by USDA and Federal government employees (pictured right). It focused on effective approaches to address recruitment, career development, and retention of Hispanic talent.



At LULAC, the USDA team not only attended the training but was an integral part of the overall program by serving on panels, facilitating workshops, speaking to over 500 hundred attendees who stopped by the USDA booth, and talking to hundreds of high school, college, and graduate students about internships, career opportunities, and USDA programs.

In July, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Administrator Ann Alonzo was a keynote speaker and talked to over 200 students at the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI) Future Leaders Conference. AMS hosted seven students as part of the Center for Agricultural Training in Agriculture and Related Sciences (CETARS) program. CETARS provides funding through USDA's Agriculture-National Institute of Food and Agriculture-Hispanic Serving Institutions (USDA-NIFA-HSI) program. All seven AMS 2014 CETARS interns are students at the University of Puerto Rico- Mayaguez Campus. Their majors range from agricultural engineering, to applied chemistry, to food science.



AMS Administrator Anne Alonzo (center, white jacket) joined Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI) Chair and former Member of Congress, the Honorable Lincoln Diaz-Balart (next to Administrator Alonzo), along with CHLI Executive Director Mary Ann Gomez, USDA staff, and interns on Capitol Hill. (Photo courtesy of CHLI.)

These important partnerships with LULAC and CHLI are ways we are addressing a core goal of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation initiative, which is to recruit, hire, retain, and promote a diverse workforce that reflects the American public. For more information, please contact Jacqueline Padrón, Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager, at jacqueline.padron@dm.usda.gov.

UPCOMING USDA SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Women's Equality Day, Tuesday, August 26, 2014

The observance is from 10:00am to 2:00pm (EDT) on the Whitten Patio, Washington, DC. Register here: [Women's Equality Day and Flash Mentoring Event Registration Page](#)

National Hispanic Heritage Month, Thursday, September 18, 2014

The observance begins at 10:00 (EDT) at the Jefferson Auditorium, Washington, DC.

Employees receive one hour of diversity training for attending USDA Special Observances.

Agricultural Marketing Service Mentoring Program Kicks Off 3rd Year

By Nichol Wallace-McMullen

Mentoring within USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) engages employees to help them develop skills, improve performance and ultimately maximize their potential.

A mentor is a guide who works with their protégé to focus on issues of concern or interest, helping develop solutions to career challenges. This is done in such a way that boosts confidence, enables employees to explore new ideas in a safe environment, fosters self-awareness, and encourages employees to take ownership of their career paths.



Agricultural Marketing Service Administrator Anne Alonzo (center, wearing the black blazer and pink skirt) is pictured with AMS employees and Mentoring Program participants.

"When I became a protégé, I had recently moved into a new position within the AMS. My mentor provided me with wonderful support during this exciting new time," said Andrea Lang. "My Mentor was always there to listen and give me that extra boost of confidence. I would leave our meetings inspired and encouraged to push myself to do better at my job. Not only did the AMS Mentoring Program pair me with someone who would provide insight and advice on working in AMS, but I also gained a new friend in the process."

The AMS Mentoring Program launched in FY-2012. With 47 mentors paired with 47 protégés, the program was successful on multiple levels. "While the role of a mentor is often to help guide their protégé, I learned a lot in return from my protégé over the last year," said mentor Melissa Bailey. "We shared experiences and knowledge about an AMS program that I had limited previous experience with and provided me, a headquarters employee, with a new perspective on what it is like to work in a field office." The second season of the AMS program increased participation to 48 Mentors and over 50 protégés. Applications for the third season of the AMS Mentoring Program are due by August 30, 2014.

APHIS Interns Share Their Story

By April Timmons & Kayla Castevens

We are interns who arrived in Miami for a ten-week internship with the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Program. Our internship was funded by the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, which USDA APHIS has partnered with for the past three years. We are animal science majors and attend North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

We learned many of the operations and procedures carried out by PPQ, including permit paperwork, inspections, identifying, and fumigation. We were introduced to many new fields, including malacology and entomology, and we gained knowledge that we would not have gained in our field of study. In addition to exposure to PPQ, we were able to spend a couple of weeks at Veterinary Services learning import and export of Avian and Equine species. We will carry this knowledge and experience with us for the rest of our careers. Who knows, maybe some of you will see us in the future!



APHIS PPQ interns April Timmons (left) and Kayla Castevens (right.)

US Forest Service Supports Guard and Reserve Veteran Employees

By Oriana Olmedo and Nicole Ebberhart

The USDA Forest Service, Human Resources Management (HRM) recently joined with National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) Local 2200 in supporting the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The ESGR is a Department of Defense office that promotes cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers. HRM Acting Deputy Director Pamela Spearow (pictured below left in the center) and NFFE Local 2200 President Machele Lang (pictured below right in the center) signed the statement at a HRM veterans recognition luncheon hosted by NFFE. They were joined by ESGR representatives Tim Paul (pictured left) and Sandy Schauer (in red.)



Two HRM employees received ESGR awards: The Patriot Award went to Truth Clark for his outstanding support as a supervisor; the Above and Beyond Award went to Jennifer Thomas for her superior performance resolving a complex military pay and leave issue.

Congratulations!

USDA Attends Peace Corps Nationwide Career Events

By Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman

According to the Peace Corps, USDA is the only Federal agency that consistently supports all of their career events held around the country this fiscal year. At no cost to the Department, USDA assisted in the coordination of Peace Corps events in Tempe, AZ; Chicago, IL; Nashville, TN; Portland, OR; San Francisco, CA and on two occasions in Washington, DC.

Each recruitment event attracted on average 200-300 job-seekers from around the country who possess global competency skills, various educational and academic backgrounds, foreign language proficiencies, and high levels of initiative and resourcefulness. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who have satisfactorily served may be non-competitively appointed to the Federal service within a one-year period after completing volunteer service.



Kathleen McAnally (right) of the Food Safety and Inspection Service speaks with a Nashville attendee on June 19, 2014.

(Photo by Debra Arnold.)

In continued support of the One-USDA approach to collectively attending various recruitment and outreach events, RPCV who work as HR Specialists, Recruiters and in other USDA jobs are stepping up to volunteer whenever needed.

Attendees meet with USDA employees who are RPCVs and learn how their Peace Corps experience gave them transferrable skills that they currently use on the job.

If any new employees (since July 1, 2013) are interested in being added to the volunteer list of 60+ USDA-RPCVs to recruit at any future Peace Corps events, please send your name, title, agency, duty station, RPCV country served, and date served to the USDA Recruitment Program Manager, Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman at recruitment@dm.usda.gov.

You can contact MyUSDA by emailing MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov, and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](http://www.usda.gov/culturaltransformation).

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to:

MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's

[Work/Life and Wellness](#)

community website if you have access to

[USDA Connections.](#)



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If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The deadline for September submissions is Tuesday, September 9, 2014.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline (with accompanying photos strongly preferred), a first-person account (describing a personal work-related experience relating to CT progress), or a "brief" (just a few sentences describing a successful Cultural Transformation event, group, initiative, or activity...or some other relevant worklife issue with an accompanying photo. Send photos as separate attachments and make sure they are high quality. **The ideal submission is a great picture with about 75-150 words to go along with it. Maximum length of articles is 250 words.**

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.